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The present purpose of our schools is to help all children assume mature adult roles, equipped with those academic and vocational skills, understandings, and attitudes which will give them social mobility; to fully develop their individual potentialities; and to effectively contribute to the improvement of our democratic society. The process has remained nearly the same for 100 years with no basic changes in organization, teaching, and curriculum.

One product, today's disadvantaged youth, is behind in achievement, unskilled, and unemployed. He compiles the highest crime rates and is immobile in our slum ghettos. He has one of the highest dropout rates and is the most alienated from society. Clearly there is a huge gap between purpose and product. Changing the purpose shifts the responsibility and offers no cure to the problem itself. Rehabilitating the product to conform to the process through extra guidance and intensive remediation has been the basis of most recent action, but again avoids the real issue. The main fault of the conventional process, particularly in the urban schools, is that it remains middle-class oriented and common-sense based. The tremendous advances in our knowledge of the learning process and in the behavioral sciences have not been utilized.

A summary outline is given of the critical areas of process change. The curriculum should be focused on intellectual development through a variety of means. It should be more pragmatic, experiential, and immediate. It should have an ungraded organization, be individualized, and be growth-directed. Materials should reflect more nearly real life situations, be multi-sensory, and be multi-cultural.

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URBAN TEACHER PREPARATION
PROGRAM

Syracuse University Ford Foundation Syracuse Public Schools
September 14, 1964

Mario D. Fantini Gerald Weinstein

THE URBAN SCHOOL: PURPOSE-PROCESS-PRODUCT

The term "urban school" is becoming more and more synonymous with "disadvantaged school". The prediction is that, in a very short time, one out of every two large city school children will be disadvantaged. So when we (the authors) talk about urban schools, we are really talking about schools for the disadvantaged.

The problems that these schools present are so complex and varied that we have tried to find a way to look at the situation so that the problems and their possible solutions might have a little sharper focus.

We have come up with a three question approach that seems to have value. It works like this:

When looking at an institution or system of institutions, we ask the following: What do they say they're trying to do?--PURPOSE; What are all the ways they try to do it?--PROCESS; Was what they did, what they said they were trying to do?--PRODUCT. By carefully examining the relationship of the purpose, process, and product, we find we get a fairly good picture of the problem and, even more important, get a good indication of where we can begin to do something about it. Let's apply this to the urban school.

What are its purposes?

The purposes that the schools had 50 to 100 years ago, when our society was still largely agrarian, are much different from those now expected in our present urban technological society. As society's conditions changed so did the demands on the schools. The schools' responsibilities today are as awesome as are the problems of our increasingly complicated world. And yet, regardless of where or what the school might be, urban, suburban, or rural, if it is a public school, there is a fairly well agreed upon purpose. It can be summarized as follows:

The present purpose of our schools is to help <u>all</u> children assume mature adult roles, equipped with those skills (academic and vocational), understandings and attitudes which will enable them a. to have the greatest possible degree of social mobility b. to fully develop their individual potentialities, and c. to effectively contribute to the improvement of our democratic society.

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What is the process?

Out of necessity, and quite realistically, our purposes have changed, but how really different is the process today from that of 100 years ago? Aside from the variety of attractive materials and modern gadgets, has there been any basic changes in organization, teaching, or curriculum? In spite of our changing purposes, there has been little basic change in the process. In the past, our schools had a graded chronological organization. Teachers were purveyors of information. Most teaching methods involved teacher-talk and books. Children accumulated factual information with tests telling how much accumulation had taken place. Large group instruction predominated with everyone studying the same thing at the same time for the same length of time. Such is the process that permeates the urban schools today.

What has been the product?

Keeping in mind the purpose, as previously stated, how does the disadvantaged child measure up to it?
Academic Skills--He is usually a year and one-half behind the national achievement norms.
Vocational Skills--He is first to take his place among the ranks of the unskilled and unemployed.
Mature Adult Roles--He compiles the highest crime rates.
Social Mobility--He remains pretty much immobile in our slum ghettos.
Individual Potentialities--He has one of the highest drop-out rates and has been acknowledged by our National government as our least tapped human resource.
Contributions to the improvement of our society--He shows the greatest degree of social alienation.

What clearly emerges here is the huge gap between purpose and product in our urban schools. What are the alternatives for affecting a remedy?

Intervention Alternatives

As we see it, there are three basic avenues of change open to us: we can change the purpose to fit the product; rehabilitate the product to conform to the process; or change the process to fit the purpose.

A. Changing the purpose

The simplest way to resolve the purpose-product discrepancy is to change the purpose of the institution. Now, at first glance, this sounds astoundingly naive, and yet it has been frequently proposed. Teachers and their administrators have maintained that "not all children are qualified for our school since they cannot meet our established standards." This notion has been reinforced by Admiral Rickover who says that we are trying to educate a great many students who are unable to learn.....students with "ability" should be segregated from the less able and given special preferred treatement.

What they are saying in effect is that the purpose of the school is to help certain "qualified" children prepare for an adult role in our society. Thus, if any pupil presents

a problem to the school, we can easily be rid of him by saying "he isn't qualified".

This approach denounces our ideal of education for all and leaves someone in the position of arbitrarily defining "ability". In addition, they don't tell us what we're supposed to do with those pupils who don't measure up to "the standards".

Changing the purpose shifts the responsibility. It certainly offers no cure to the problem itself.

Assuming the schools are responsible for the education of all children, what is another alternative?

B. Rehabilitate the product to conform to the process.

This approach makes the assumption that the process is fine....and something has to be done to the child (faulty product) to help him adjust to it. Through extra guidance counsellors, we can perhaps convince the pupil of the importance of schooling and even iron out some of the difficulties he may be having with some of his teachers. We can also supply intensive remediation in reading so that the child will make a better classroom adjustment and get a little closer to the "norm." Psychological help can be supplied so that the pupil will be more emotionally amenable to the process. Or we can take these children to all sorts of museums, concerts, and plays so that their horizons become expanded, making them see a greater value in conforming to the process.

Sometimes we don't even bother to seduce him so subtly. In the case of a recent project for dropouts, all we did was ask them to return to school. They did and most dropped out again. They were being exposed to the very same process which had made little or no contact with them previously.

It must be very obvious by this time as to what we are leading up to. It's simply this, changing the purpose or making a faulty product conform to something that doesn't work well, are both ways of running from the real issue, which is;

C. Changing the Process

We have mentioned the changing purposes of the public schools. About how, even though the goals changed, the means by which these goals are to be achieved have remained relatively static. But, you may ask what's the matter with the process as it is? As far as urban schools go, it definitely is not resulting in desired product. The reasons for this seem quite clear. Due to the population shift of the middle and high income groups to suburban areas, our large urban centers across the nation are becoming increasingly poor. Social scientific evidence clearly establishes a correlation between social class and youth problems. Lower economic groups have a higher rate of youth problems, such as; delinquency, school drop-outs, and

low achievement. Consequently, as schools serving primarily middle-class neighborhoods began to change to schools serving poor communities, a series of faulty products resulted which clearly pointed out the disparity between the needs of the underprivileged learner and the ability of the school to provide for these needs through its conventional process.

After all, what has been the foundation of this process? Nothing more than common sense. There was, at the inception of our public schools, little or no research on how children learn. The behavioral sciences were in their infant stages. However, even with the great advances in the behavioral sciences in the last 50 years, the basic process has remained intact. Ask any educational psychologist this question: "What psychological evidence supports a chronologically graded school?" The answer will probably be: (if he's worth his salt) "None!" It's strictly common sense to assume that children who are the same age will be ready to learn the same things, at the same times, for the same length of time.

Common sense is fine if you have no evidence to contradict it. Most teachers, especially those now working in urban schools without any "psychological research," will testify, we're sure, that their pupils' behavior absolutely contradict a graded approach. In other words, it's not even good common sense any more.

To summarize then, the main fault of the conventional process particularly in urban schools, is that it remains middle-class oriented and common sense based.

Even with all the compensatory services we offer to the disadvantaged child, we can't expect him to successfully conform to a process which makes little contact with his needs, abilities and interests. And, yet, most of the educational projects for urban areas around the nation are devoted mainly to the intervention alternative: rehabilitation through additive compensatory services.

Why the great reluctance to change the process? Because it is the change of process that involves the most discomfort to school personnel,....and understandably so. The educational machinery has become a dictator. The more gigantic and bureaucratic it becomes, the less susceptible it is to change. In a study of Pennsylvania, investigators showed that 15 years elapsed, on the average, between the date of introduction of a practice and that of its diffusion through 3 per cent of the schools.[1] Although the study was made back in 1941, more recent studies indicate that things haven't improved to any great degree.

It is to a large extent this inability to initiate institutional changes in its process with sufficient speed to deal effectively with the needs of the present that we have increasing numbers of individuals unable to assume the desired roles in our society.

1. Paul R. Mort and Francis G. Cornell, American Schools in Transition. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Univ. 1941.

Thus two main questions confront urban educators today:

1. Are we willing to revamp and create a new process? If so, what might the new process be?
2. How do we get the bureaucracy to change?

We are going to concern ourselves with the first problem; what should the new process be? It will include some ideas as to how change can be effected; but that part will be developed in greater detail elsewhere.

We will begin with a summary outline of the areas we feel are critical in process change and then attempt to treat each item in detail with specific illustrations based on our experiences in urban schools.

However, before we go ahead, we wish to state at the outset that there is really nothing intrinsically new in the new process. The point is, that although many schools have toyed with certain elements, the really new thing we are recommending is the greatly extended utilization of these ideas in disadvantaged (as well as advantaged) schools. For many years, these same elements of the new process have been recommended for all schools. Certain systems picked some of them for "experiments" but when the experiment was over, what happened? Middle-class schools could more easily afford to ignore the new process because their pupils "seemed" to learn in spite of what the school did. They could afford to take their time innovating. But, in the case of the disadvantaged schools, there were all kinds of eruptions. The symptoms were overt and overwhelming. The big cities cried "help". Can't you do something to contain them?" They were willing to get rid of symptoms by giving someone "carte blanche" to do it. And so, ironically, the principals of sound educational process were permitted to enter the slum schools.
What may hopefully occur is a contagion of ideas. That is, an improved process in slum schools could readily infiltrate the "better schools" with education for the disadvantaged improving the education for all.

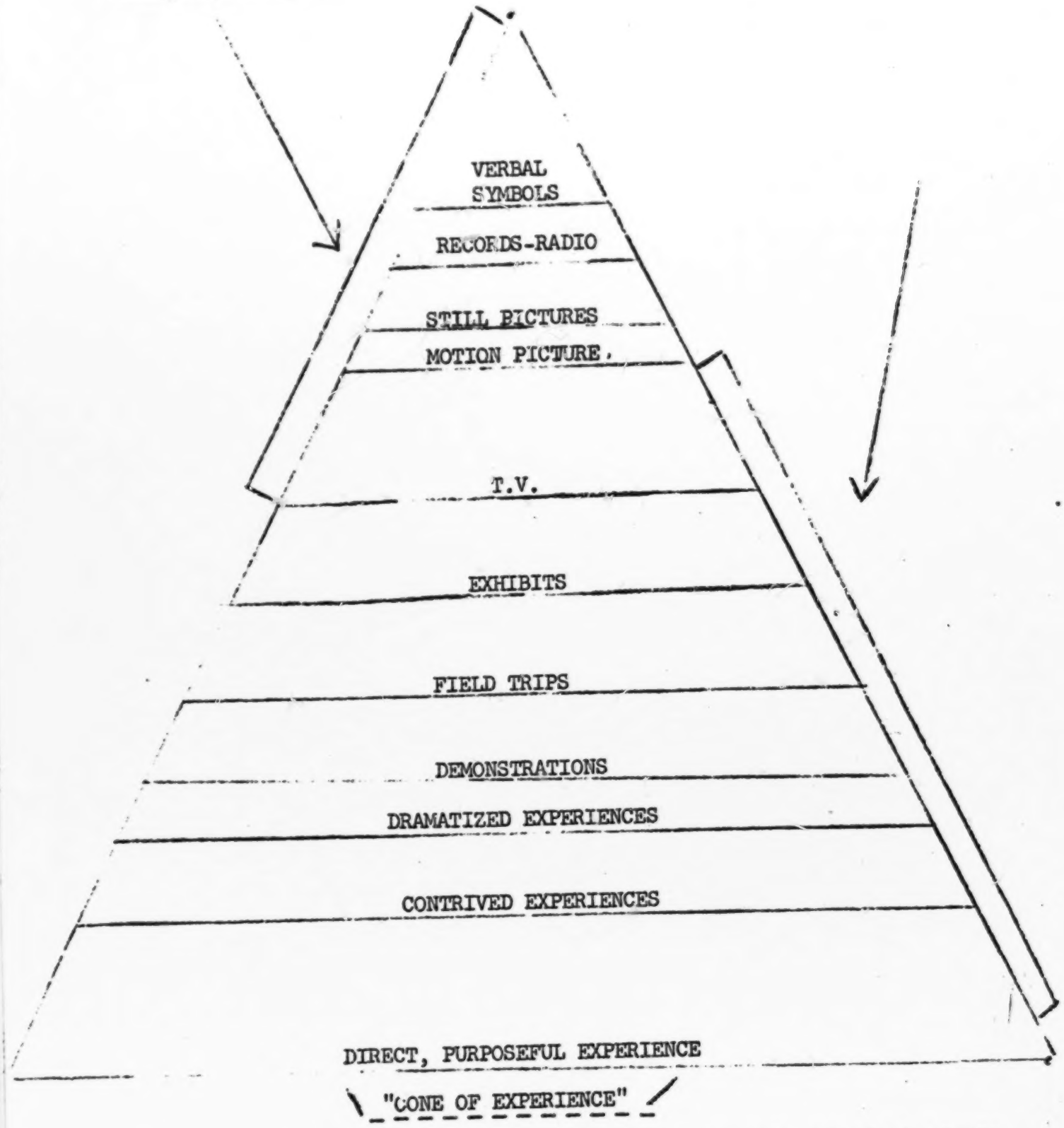
THE URBAN SCHOOL

CONVENTIONAL PROCESS	NEW PROCESS
PURPOSE	
FROM:	TO:
1. Serving the needs of a segment of our population	1. Serving the need of the total population
2. Preparation for a stable agrarian society	2. Preparation for a changing technological society
FOUNDATIONS	
FROM:	TO:
1. Common sense approach based limited information regarding learning theories	1. Learning now viewed as complex interaction of forces leading to theoretically based process
CURRICULUM	
FROM:	TO:
1. Intellectual development solely through academic which is abstractly oriented	1. Intellectual development through a variety of means which are more pragmatic
2. Uniform pace and content	2. Individualized programming in pace and content
3. Factual rooted in academic	3. Conceptual rooted in concrete
4. Knowledge for knowledge sake	4. Applied knowledge
5. Symbolic learning	5. Experiential
6. Antiseptic	6. Concerned with social problems
7. Past-future oriented	7. More immediate
8. Intra-group (white Anglo-Saxon) Unicultural	8. Intergroup (all groups) Multicultural

CURRICULUM (con't)

CONVENTIONAL PROCESS

NEW PROCESS



"CONE OF EXPERIENCE"

9. Uniform standards for all	9. Individualized standards
10. Graded organization	10. Ungraded organization
11. Competition with others	11. Competition with self
12. Marks directed	12. Growth directed

CONVENTIONAL PROCESS	NEW PROCESS
MATERIALS	
FROM:	TO:
1. Middle class-white	1. Representative of all races and classes
2. Uniform reading and interest levels	2. Varying combinations of reading and interest levels
3. Non-reality based	3. More nearly reflects real life situations
4. Uni-sensory	4. Multi-sensory
5. Learner involved passively	5. Learner involved actively and kinesthetically
6. Making little contact with pupils' life style	6. Makes direct contact with pupils' life style
7. Group oriented	7. Individually oriented
8. Rewards with limited significance	8. Rewards that are ego-developing
9. Symbolic-representative materials	9. Real objects
10. Dependent	10. Independent (self-instructional)
TEACHING	
FROM:	TO:
1. Isolated	1. Co-operative
2. Deductive	2. Inductive
3. Abstract, Word-Bound	3. Concrete-Active-Physical-Visual
4. Middle class oriented	4. Multi-class oriented
5. Future-past oriented	5. Here-and-now oriented
6. Geared to one style of learning	6. Geared to many styles of learning
7. Recipient of instructional policy	7. Initiator of instructional policy
8. Suburban trained teachers	8. Urban trained teachers